



Base to get new road

By LEE FORST

Daily News Staff Writer

Motorists who brave the daily traffic snarls getting to and from Hurlburt Field's East Gate on Lovejoy Road could be using a new route to the base by this time next year.

Design work has been completed for a new four-lane road that will run west and south from Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to a new gate. Construction could begin on the half-mile road next spring.

Okaloosa County and Hurlburt officials are counting on the new entrance road to relieve congestion at the intersection of Hill Avenue and Lovejoy.

Thousands of motorists pass through the intersection every day getting to and from the gate at the west end of Lovejoy, or traveling to the Fort Walton Beach Commerce and Technology Park, Hollywood Boulevard farther south, or the Wright area to the north.

"It slows their people getting to work all day long," said Danielle Slaterpryce, Okaloosa's public works director.

"That becomes a bottleneck, and it's to alleviate the congestion there," added Hurlburt spokesman Ian Stern.

The county is in charge of building the road from Martin Luther King to a new gate just north of the existing East Gate. Hurlburt will finish the work from the gate south to Independence Road.

A traffic signal will be installed at the intersection of Martin Luther King and the new road. Plans call for the existing gate to be closed to all but emergency vehicles.

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ROAD

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Construction is estimated to cost \$1.25 million. Engineering and right-of-way purchases from Northgate Development Co. and Abundant Life Church push the total cost to about \$2 million.

The Federal Highway Administration is picking up the tab.

County commissioners earlier this week OK'd advertising for bids from contractors and are expected to decide in February who will get the job. Construction will take about nine months.

The existing gate was opened in 1990 to coincide with

the opening of Martin Luther King, then called Freedom Way. But it didn't take long for Hurlburt's growth and the convenience of the bypass to choke the Lovejoy-Hill intersection.

■ Staff Writer Lee Forst can be reached at 863-1111, Ext. 406, or leef@nwfdailynews.com